Fast Facts on the

State's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

A 2015 Executive Order (EO B-29-15) directed the California Department of Water Resources to update the State's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, a 1993 landscape ordinance that's now a building code related to landscape design and installation. Here are some fast facts on how to comply with the ordinance:

What is the need for the law?
The Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) is a state regulation designed to prevent water from being wasted on irrigated landscapes. The law is important because about half of the water directed to urban areas is used on irrigated landscapes. The MWELO was created in 1993 from the 1990 Water Conservation and Landscaping Act and was updated in 2015 at the height of the drought.

What is the responsibility of Land Use Authorities (Cities and Counties)?
The law directs Land Use Authorities (cities and counties) to ensure MWELO compliance on development projects with landscaped areas of 500 square feet or more. This applies to residential, commercial, industrial and institutional projects that require a permit, plan check, or design review. Land Use Authorities are responsible for enforcing the ordinance.

What is the role of DWR?
DWR provides technical assistance to help Land Use Authorities adhere to the ordinance. Land Use Authorities are required to submit annual reports documenting MWELO permitting each year by January 31.

Click here to read the 2015 Updated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

Click here for the 2019 Annual Reporting MWELO Form

Additional information:

- DWR and the **League of California Cities** will host a webinar on Jan. 23 to answer questions related to compliance with the ordinance
- DWR will continue to accept the reports beyond the January 31 deadline.
- DWR plans to issue a guidebook for local agencies that will provide more in-depth instruction on how to comply with the ordinance. Following the release of the guidebook, DWR will host online and in-person workshops.